



**MINUTES OF THE SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREA
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEATAC)
MEETING OF 3 November 2008**

PERSONS IN ATTENDANCE:

SEATAC MEMBERS

Jonathan Baskin
Ty Garrison
Scott Harris
Michael Long
Thomas Scott (absent)
Cheryl Swift (absent)

REGIONAL PLANNING STAFF

Shirley Imsand
M.V.B. Reddy

Place and Date

Monday, 3 November, 2008

Time: 1:00 P.M.
Place: DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING
Hall of Records, Room 1385
320 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

All the members and the coordinator identified themselves at the start of the meeting

OLD BUSINESS

1. 1:00 p.m. Review and approve the SEATAC minutes of 6 October 2008.

Discussed Dan Cooper's candidature for SEATAC membership and all the SEATAC members present recommended to pursue the candidature of Dan Cooper becoming a SEATAC member to fill the vacancy left by Ian Swift.

If you require reasonable accommodations or auxiliary aids and services such as material in an alternate format or a sign language interpreter, please contact the ADA (American with Disabilities Act) Coordinator at (213) 974-6488 (Voice) or (213) 617-2292 (TDD), with at least five business days notice.

1:15 p.m. **Project Description: Rancho San Francisquito, VTTM 69788**

Applicant: Rick Doremus for owner (Present)

Biologists: Thomas Leslie & Nadya Leslie (Present)

A project for Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 69788, with a Conditional Use Permit for grading and development in an SEA/hillside management area, for the subdivision of a 29.09 acre portion of the property, located east of San Francisquito Canyon Road, into four parcels with five single family home site pads. One residential pad is proposed for Parcel 1, 2, and 3, with two pads proposed for Parcel 4. The 13.53 acre remainder parcel, located west of San Francisquito Canyon Road, is not proposed for development and will remain as open space. **This open space parcel is located within the San Francisquito Canyon Significant Ecological Area (SEA #19).** The total combined area of the property to be developed and the open space parcel is 42.62 acres. The developed residential pad areas proposed will have driveway access from private streets, which will connect to San Francisquito Canyon Road. The project site is on San Francisquito Canyon Road in an area just north of Saugus.

SEA RESOURCE DESCRIPTION: San Francisquito Canyon possesses two populations of the Unarmored Three spine Stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni*). This species was formerly found in the Los Angeles, San Gabriel, and Santa Ana Rivers, but is now restricted to the Santa Clara River and San Francisquito Canyon. For this reason, the stickleback has been placed on both the state and federal endangered species lists and is State fully protected. In San Francisquito Canyon, it is confined to permanent streams and pools below Drinkwater Reservoir, and above Baird Canyon. The lower population is dependent on legally mandated water release from Drinkwater Reservoir.

The watershed that supplies San Francisquito Canyon is relatively undisturbed. The hillsides support a dense cover of coastal sage scrub and chaparral. The San Francisquito stream course is mostly natural and it maintains a good riparian woodland community. The health of this drainage is evident by the fact that, in addition to supporting the unarmored three spine stickleback, the creek has been classified as an active trout fishing stream by the National Forest Service and the California Department of Fish and Game.

The primary concerns for the survival of the Unarmored Three spine Stickleback is the maintenance its habitat. The fish requires clean, free-flowing perennial streams and ponds surrounded by natural vegetation. Intermittent areas where surface water connects perennial streams are also important during the wet season. The natural vegetation along the intermittent portion of the stream slows heavy runoff during the rainy season, decreases destruction and siltation of habitat in downstream areas, and provides habitat for migration between populations. The Unarmored Three spine Stickleback populations in San Francisquito Canyon are the only ones for which the possibility exists to plan and control development in the majority of the watershed.

Status: The majority of San Francisquito Canyon lies within the Angeles National Forest. However, much of the land is privately owned. The only major developments in the canyon are the Los Angeles Aqueduct, the San Francisquito Road in the canyon bottom, and the community of Green Valley.

Nature of Information: Due to its status as an endangered species, the habitat of the Unarmored Three spine Stickleback has been extensively analyzed.

Buffer Zone Requirement: Development in the watershed feeding San Francisquito Creek must not be allowed to change natural drainage patterns, or to increase runoff and water pollution. Hillside development should be limited and tightly controlled. Impacts must be analyzed for their cumulative, not piecemeal, effects on the habitat.

Compatible Uses: Very low intensity recreational uses are compatible with most of the resources in the area. Fishing is compatible throughout most of the canyon, and should be conducted according to the rules and regulations of the National Forest Service and California Department of Fish and Game. However, use of the pools below Drinkwater Reservoir and above Baird Canyon, both of which contain populations of the endangered Stickleback, should be restricted to regulated scientific study only.

It is desirable that contact be made with the Unarmored Three spine Stickleback recovery team to keep abreast of current programs and changes in the status of the species.

The previous SEATAC meeting for the project occurred on 5 May 2008.

Action Requested: Continued review of combined Biological Constraints Analysis and Biota Report submitted in April 2008, with review of focus studies requested by SEATAC members at the previous meeting 5 May 2008. Applicant is requesting a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project under Article 6 (Guideline 15070) under CEQA. Mitigation measures will be proposed.

Discussion:

SEATC members would like to know the entire site is surveyed for biota report. The project biologist replied that they surveyed the entire site. Minutes from the previous meeting showed that the site could be a habitat for three spine stickleback when flooded and the project biologist should work with three spine stickleback recovery team to propose mitigation measures. However, few members from the SEATAC expressed that there is no such recovery team and recommended preservation of the habitat for possible movement of the sp.

SEATAC team would like to know the occurrence of California Gnatcatcher in the project area or how far from the boundaries of the VTP #69788. The biologist pointing out the reports mentioned that it is 0.3±miles from the boundaries of the site. Further the SEATAC team requested the project biologists should know about all the critical habitats encompassing the project site and its boundaries. Any surveys of that sort are good for one year and it was shown that no other rare or listed threatened or endangered

or unlisted special- status bird species were identified within the boundaries of VTPN 69788 during the six 2008 protocol CAGN field surveys.

The committee projected that the project doesn't show recommendations and responses from the previous meeting and felt that it would have been better if the report format is organized in this manner so that it is easier to review. The biologists were open to the suggestions and willing to modify the report.

Discussing the open space within the development, the committee wanted to propose some sort of easement so that the open space remains undeveloped. Since it is also under SEA with coastal sage scrub populations proposing an easement is important. The developer stated that the proposed open space is not a part of subdivision and nothing is proposed at the moment. The committee then wondered if it is not part of the subdivision, why it is included in the development. It was unclear and felt that this could be a fifth lot of the subdivision and SEATAC reiterated that it should be undeveloped in future and county can propose it as an open space easement as it is in SEA. Furthermore, a fuel modification plan is recommended to keep the open space. Both the developer and the biologists would like to incorporate the SEATAC suggestions in the revised plan. Since the subdivision is a sensitive habitat for coastal sage scrub, SEATAC would like to see the mitigation plan.

Keeping the coastal sage scrub populations which could be a habitat for California Gnat catcher the committee recommended that the developer and the biologist to come up with fuel modification plan depicting sensitive habitat, acreage, sensitive species and proposed mitigation measures for the development. It was also discussed that the part of the parcel west of the Road is sensitive to development due to nearby riparian habitat, Riversidian alluvial fan sage scrub populations and river bottom. SEATAC wants an open space easement over the entire parcel. The mitigation required for impacts of the project, especially to coastal sage scrub, may be accounted for in the parcel. The remainder, after project mitigation, may be retained as future mitigation land for projects proposed by the owner, or other if the owner agrees to sell mitigation rights. If this route is chosen, the County must agree to an established mitigation value for the remainder parcel. The developer was in agreement with the discussion and agreed to come up with fuel modification plan based on the discussions.

Recommendation: To come up with fuel modification plan incorporating the suggestions from the SEATAC.

Approval: Minutes were approved on Jan 5th 2009, with a motion from Ty Garrison and seconded by Scott Harris.

SEATAC meeting date: November 3, 2008

SEATAC Evaluation: X Consistent Consistent after Modification
Inconsistent No decision